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Senators' Letter Seeking Inquiry Into Spy's Fate

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 10 — Following is the text of a letter sent to Senators Birch Bayh and Barry Goldwater, the chairman and vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, by two members of the panel requesting hearings on a controversy surrounding the purported death of a Soviet official who had been engaged as a spy for the United States:

Dear Birch and Barry:

Over the past year we have seen the daily press, Newsweek, and even The London Daily Telegraph discuss details of what appears to be a major intelligence failure which the U.S. has suffered — the loss of an important human source in the Soviet Union. According to one of these articles, suspicion has even arisen that a mistake by a senior Government official may have contributed to this problem.

It is unhealthy for suspicions on such matters to fester, and it is of course intolerable for the issue to be debated in the press by a series of leaks and counter-leaks. The Select Committee was formed to act as the public's agent for investigating matters of this sort in a confidential and responsible manner. This is particularly so when it has been alleged that the Executive Branch's handling of the matter may have been affected by partisan concerns.

We therefore ask you to convene a series of closed hearings to explore what has happened to our human intelligence collection in the Soviet Union in recent years, what effect this has had on our intelligence capabilities, what efforts have been made to determine the causes of what has happened, and what might be done to prevent a recurrence of similar events.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and await your favorable reply.

Sincerely,

MALCOLM WALLOP
DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN